

Innovation platforms as institutional innovations for sustainable intensification in Ethiopian highlands

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Introduction

Local level Innovation Platforms (IPs) in Africa RISING project sites in Ethiopia operate at three level (woreda, kebele and farmers research group level) to create opportunities for cooperation and co-learning that identify suitable Sustainable Intensification (SI) interventions and scaling up. In each project sites IPs have contributed to facilitated meaningful and effective interactions that have prioritized, guided, and evaluated the various research and development processes. Regular learning events and annual farmers field days organized for all IP members and farmers (participating and non participating) helped the project to leave its legacy among the local actors who have already started partnering to scale up the suitable SI interventions in their sites. Phase II strategies and activities on partnership will keep this momentum to be kept and accelerated for wider scaling up.

Africa RISING interlinked Innovation Platforms at project sites

The table below shows the three levels where IPs operate. These are all interlinked within the district and it shows also the number of innovation clusters called Farmers Research Groups (FRGs) established around commodity based action research. Four strategic IP, eight operational IP and many more innovation clusters established.

| District Strategic IPs | Kebele Operational IPs | # of Farmers Research Groups |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Lemo | Upper Gana | 9 FRGs |
| | Jewe | 9 FRGs |
| Sinana | Illu-Sanbitu | 7 FRGs |
| | Selka | 6 FRGs |
| Endamehoni | Tsibet | 8 FRGs |
| | Embahasti | 6 FRGs |
| Basona Worena | Goshe Bado | 7 FRGs |
| | Gudo Beret | 8 FRGs |



Sinana woreda Strategic IP facilitation team supporting participatory approach to identify participating farmers (Photo credit: ILRI\Apollo H.)

Approaches used to establish and facilitate IPs in Phase I

- Stakeholder analysis to identify actors at district and kebele level
- Organized lunching workshops and developed common understanding on the role of members
- Capacity developed for the district level facilitation team on facilitation, communication and M&E
- District level facilitation team established to support cooperation and learning to influence the relevance of each research project to the local contexts, needs and priorities of actors and smallholder farmers
- Learning events organized through regular meetings
- Farmers field days as an engagement strategy to evaluate what works and what didn't work at farm level

Outcomes

- Capacity of local actors to cooperate and learn increased
- Local actors engaged and strong partnership created and own innovations that Africa RISING project introduced to the sites
- Strategic IPs have identified SI innovations that can be scaled up within the *woreda* and beyond (*wheat* and feed utilization facilities in *Endamehoni* *woreda* and *Tigray* region)
- Local decision makers and other key partners have started supporting scaling up efforts in all the four districts (For instance - *Bale* Zone Administration and *Madawalabu* University in *Sinana* *woreda* IP)
- Local partners empowered to develop their own research projects within Africa RISING (Eg. *Lemo* *woreda* IP on *Enset* research and *Endamehoni* *woreda* IP about *Desho* grass for improved livestock feed)

Future learning strategies for Phase II

- Case study to capture changes among IP members (social network analysis)
- Engage and link national level actors with local platforms in efforts to support scaling up (SAIRLA – National Learning Alliance in Ethiopia)
- Building local partners' capacity to develop and implement scaling up strategy within their districts
- Develop communication and knowledge management strategy to promote scaling up of SI interventions within and beyond the research sites

Core partners



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